

and further elaborating his initial hypothesis, Lindberg has arrived at an argument that is both path-breaking and persuasive.

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Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda by TIMOTHY LONGMAN
Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 350, £55.00, US\$90.00 (hbk).
doi:10.1017/S0022278X10000583

Pope John Paul II reacted to criticism of the Christian church and its alleged involvement in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda by stating that only individuals (thus Christians as well) were implicated in the genocide, but that the church as an institution was not to blame. In *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*, Timothy Longman challenges this claim. He suggests that the churches and even Christianity as such bear an important responsibility for the Rwandan genocide. At least, Christian faith as it existed in Rwanda. The latter issue, a contextualisation of Christianity in Rwandan socio-political history, is paramount if one wants to grasp the nature of the involvement of Christianity in one of the most horrific events of the twentieth century. Longman argues that the distinct nature of Christianity in Rwanda as it developed over time made genocide morally possible: 'The Christian message received in Rwanda was not one of "love and fellowship", but one of obedience, division, and power' (p. 10). Moreover, his analysis of the process through which a significant part of the church leadership became actively involved in the genocidal violence parallels the dominant interpretations of the dynamics of the Rwandan genocide: the ethnic card was played to counter a threat to the status quo. Generally this argument is used to explain the reaction to the challenge of the reign of the political elite in power, with a focus on Christianity: it refers to a threat to the dominating Christian message in Rwanda and the established order in the Church hierarchy.

Longman meticulously traces the origins of the Christian church in Rwanda from the first missionaries until the apocalyptic last days of the Second Republic in 1994. The first part of the book comprises five chapters through which the evolution of Christian churches in Rwanda is described and analysed in chronological order. The first two chapters in this section deal with Christianity and the colonial state. The missionary activity of the White Fathers was marked by the desire to foster a partnership with the state; church leaders did not side with the poor. Over time, the Christian churches actively helped to shape the nature of ethnic identities through their alliance with vested powers and participation in (ethnic) politics. The church imbued ethnicity with racial connotations and the socio-political landscape was read through the prism of ethnic identities. This type of missionary work by the White Fathers would lay the groundwork for the nature of Christianity in Rwanda. It also implies that the most important chunk of Rwandan civil society was co-opted by the state from the start.

Chapters Four to Six deal with the developments of Christianity in the post-colonial era and especially with the period of democratisation starting in 1990. There were no major changes in the nature of Christianity in Rwanda after independence. In the end, it was the overall environment created by the churches since their arrival in Rwanda that made it possible that 'practicing Christians

could kill their neighbours without feeling that they were acting inconsistently with their faith' (p. 191). Such a claim is shocking, although Longman presents his argument convincingly. And it counters the claim made by several authors that massive participation of Christians in the genocide was a consequence of the fact that Christianity had not taken deep root in Rwandan society. But the puzzle of the Rwandan genocide is not only why the majority of ordinary (Christian) Rwandans *could* become involved in the genocide, but especially why they actually *were* involved in the killing of their neighbours. To make sense of the actual behaviour by the mass of practicing Christians living on the hills of Rwanda, one also needs an insight in the so-called 'passage à l'acte'. To do so, Longman develops a second argument. An undercurrent of dissent with the policy of (political) engagement with the powerful that existed within the churches since their arrival could only come to maturity in the period of democratisation in the years preceding the genocide. The growing influence of diverging practices and visions within the Church would eventually – and paradoxically – define the nature of the involvement of the established church structures and personnel in the genocidal violence: 'the genocide helped to eradicate those other possibilities and to reassert churches as authoritarian institutions allied to an authoritarian state' (p. 197).

An exploration of micro-level dynamics and motives is paramount in underscoring the claim that the genocide was also used to bolster positions of authority within the churches. In the second part of the book the focus changes therefore to micro-level developments in two Presbyterian parishes situated in rural Rwanda: Kirinda and Biguhu. Longman describes the different nature of the relations between the church, local elites and inhabitants in the parishes in the period preceding the genocide. The local elite of Kirinda were centred around the church in a 'patron-client system parallel to and linked with the state patrimonial system' (p. 200). During the genocide and in an attempt to reassert their challenged authority, they found enough support among the peasants to organise the massacre of the Tutsi. The genocidal violence in Biguhu, a parish nearby, had to be initiated from the outside. Longman connects this diverging conflict pathway to the fact that the church had fostered a cooperative connection with and within the general population, devoid of any misuse of power and ethnic polarisation.

One of the absolute strengths of the book is the wealth of first-hand information presented. Longman is one of the few scholars in the exploding field of Rwanda studies able to pair research conducted in the post-genocide era with first-hand insight from before the genocide. He conducted his initial research on Christian churches in Rwanda in 1992–3. In the aftermath of the genocide, he was a researcher with Human Rights Watch and contributed to the most comprehensive study on the genocide to date: *Leave None to Tell the Story*. During this period he was able to follow up on the information he had collected before the genocide. First-hand observations, in-depth interviews and even rare material from communal archives make the evidence compelling.

Nevertheless, some issues could have been given more attention. For example, Longman only briefly mentions the fact that members of the *Abarokore* religious movement resisted the genocide since they 'were generally not integrated in the established structures of power' and 'arose as challenge to the structures of power' of the Pentecostal church (p. 196). Together with the fact that Muslims are

said to have participated much less in the genocide, this observation poses an important counter-example that could have been used more to underscore the main thesis about the nature of the dominant Christian faith in Rwanda. Equally, the fact that in the end there was also genocide in the parish of Biguhu, and that in neither of the two parishes was the genocide initiated by the church, at least raises some questions with respect to the overall conclusion that churches are necessarily political institutions (p. 313). In the end, it was the state and state personnel that initiated and drove the genocide through these parishes and the entire Rwandan society. Although it is clear that churches should indeed be considered as centres of power, the analysis lacks an adequate explanation of these remaining differences observed between church and state (actors) during the genocide.

These minor remaining questions do not render the book weaker. They could be considered as further avenues for analysis. The layered analysis means that the work can be read with different objectives in mind and by a wide and diverse audience. The main story of the nature of Christianity is embedded in the political and social developments in Rwanda, at both the national and the local level. Such a combination of perspectives is hard to find in works either on Rwanda or on the phenomenon of genocide as such. *Christianity and Genocide* is a necessary piece of the puzzle for those interested in a range of topics: Rwandan history (and the genocide), genocide, Christianity and religion, civil society and the wider socio-political developments in Central Africa.

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Human Rights in African Prisons edited by J. SARKIN

Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008. Pp 254, US\$28.00 (pbk).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X10000510

Many turn to the introduction of an edited volume looking for an incisive analytic overview and a brief synthesis of the issues at stake, and neglect the substantive chapters. This would be a mistake in the case of *Human Rights in African Prisons* for two reasons. First, because the Introduction adds little to the substantive chapters, except to frame them in overambitious terms; and second, because the greatest strength of the volume is the depth of the substantive chapters. Each chapter offers useful information and analytic insight of relevance particularly to those with special interests in the specific topic being addressed, such as women, children, pre-trial detention, rehabilitation, or alternative sentencing. Examples from a multiplicity of African countries are served up, giving the reader insights into the many challenges facing African prisons and especially the rights-based penal reformer. As a whole, however, the volume suffers from too few interconnections and too much repetition across chapters.

The *Introduction* points out that there are few comparative studies of African prisons, which is true, but the full potential of comparative analysis is not utilised, partly because the empirical foundation for such analysis remains lacking. The volume also fails in its bid to be comprehensive and its attempt to 'draw together the available research'. It does succeed in highlighting the 'vast gap between the international legal obligations assumed by African states and the reality of the